Excuse of Ignorance

(Booklet translated)

Shaykh Abū Bilāl al-Harbī

تقبله الله

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[The ruling on the one who excuses out of ignorance]

By the mujahid Shaykh Abū Bilāl al-Harbī (may Allāh accept him)

All praise is due to Allāh, Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the most noble of the Prophets and Messengers

To proceed..

Indeed, the issue of the ruling on the one who excuses out of ignorance (*al-ʿādhir bil-jahl*) has, in these days, become a matter of widespread debate among the people of Islam. Rather, some have made it the decisive criterion between a Muslim and a disbeliever, and its sparks have spread among the people of Tawhīd, such that they have been declared disbelievers for opposing the people of desires. And when I came under the shade of jihād, I sought guidance from Allāh regarding this issue, and He guided me to a view which I believe to be the truth, and I free myself from any position before it.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

"The people of jihād have, in this matter, guidance and insight that the people of mere striving do not have. For this reason, al-Awzāʿī and Ibn al-Mubārak said: if the people differ over something, then look at what the people of the frontiers (fighting) are upon, for Allāh says:

{*And those who strive in Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways*}"

(*Madārij al-Sālikīn* 1/506)

I ask Allāh to make me among them.

To begin with: the discussion is about the ruling on the one who excuses out of ignorance, not about the one who falls into major shirk. The one who falls into shirk is a mushrik in all cases, whether he is knowledgeable or ignorant, and whether the proof has been established upon him or not.

Rather, our discussion is limited to the ruling on the one who excuses out of ignorance someone who has fallen into shirk from among those who ascribe themselves to Islam

So I say, seeking help from Allāh:

The scholars of the daʿwah have two positions regarding the ruling on the excuser

One of them is: declaring the excuser a disbeliever due to ignorance directly, without clarification.

And the other is: not declaring the excuser a disbeliever except after clarification.

And here are some of their statements declaring the excuser a disbeliever before clarification:

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb said:

"How excellent is what one of the Bedouins said when he came to us and heard something of Islam. He said: I bear witness that we are disbelievers, and that the one who calls us Muslims is himself a disbeliever"

Shaykh ʿAbdullāh and Ibrāhīm, the sons of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, and Shaykh Ibn Siḥmān said:

"The imāmah (leading in prayer) of one who does not declare the Jahmiyyah and the grave-worshippers to be disbelievers, or doubts their disbelief, is not valid. This issue is among the clearest of clear matters for the students of knowledge and the people of the Sunnah. Likewise, the grave-worshippers – no one who has even smelled the scent of īmān doubts their disbelief."

And some of the scholars of Najd said:

"Whoever does not declare the polytheists of the Turkish state and the grave-worshippers, such as the people of Makkah and others who worshipped the righteous and turned away from the Tawhīd of Allāh to shirk, to be disbelievers, then he is a disbeliever like them... for the one who does not declare the polytheists to be disbelievers is not affirming the Qur'an."

These statements from the scholars of the daʿwah indicate the disbelief of the excuser due to ignorance directly, without clarification.

However, what disturbs this conclusion are other statements from the scholars of the daʿwah which show that the one who excuses out of ignorance is not declared a disbeliever except after clarification. Here are some of those statements:

Imām Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb said:

"To my brothers... what you mentioned about the statement of the Shaykh that whoever denies such and such, and the proof has been established upon him, and that you are doubtful regarding these tawāghīt and their followers – whether the proof has been established upon them – this is astonishing. How can you doubt this when I have clarified it to you many times..."

(*Fatāwā al-Aʾimmah al-Najdiyyah* 3/70)

So the Shaykh did not declare his students disbelievers, even though they were doubtful about the disbelief of the tawaghit, so reflect on this.

And Shaykh Sulaymān ibn ʿAbdullāh said:

"As for the questioner's statement: if a person is unable to openly declare their disbelief and insult them, what is his ruling? The answer: it must be one of three cases – either he doubts their disbelief, or is ignorant of it, or he affirms that they are disbelievers, they and those like them, but is unable to confront them and declare them disbelievers. If he doubts their disbelief or is ignorant of it, then the proofs from the Book and Sunnah are clarified to him. If he still doubts or hesitates after that, then he is a disbeliever by the consensus of the scholars."

(*Fatāwā al-Aʾimmah al-Najdiyyah* 3/73)

And Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf said:

"Whoever singles out certain places for acts of worship, or believes that standing at them removes the obligation of hajj, then his disbelief is something that no one who has even smelled the scent of īmān would doubt. And whoever doubts his disbelief, then the proof must be established upon him and it must be clarified that this is disbelief and shirk. If the proof is established upon him and he persists, then there is no doubt about his disbelief."

Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān said:

“Regarding those from the grave-worshippers and the Jahmiyyah upon whom the proof has been established, and those who ally with them or argue on their behalf after the words of the scholars regarding their takfīr has become clear to him, and it is established that the proof has reached them and been established upon them through the condemnation of the people of Islam – even if they did not fully understand the proof – then if he arrogantly persists and rejects: if it is based on interpretation, then I do not know his state, and his matter is severe, and his threat is severe. And if it is otherwise, then we seek refuge in Allāh from relapse after guidance.”

From what has preceded, it is clear that the scholars of the daʿwah have explicit statements declaring the excuser a disbeliever directly, and they also have explicit statements that the excuser is not declared a disbeliever except after clarification and the establishment of proof.

So what should we do?

Should we pick and choose from their statements..!

Or should we use some of their statements against others..!

All of this is not correct. Rather, what is correct is that we understand their general statements about declaring the excuser a disbeliever in light of their restricted statements regarding the establishment of proof (*iqāmat al-hujjah*), since the cause is the same.

So the fact that the excuser falls into something that constitutes disbelief is agreed upon, but the disagreement is about declaring him a disbeliever before clarification or after it. And it has already been mentioned that the correct view according to the scholars of the daʿwah is that **the excuser is only declared a disbeliever after the proof is established.**

Is declaring the excuser a disbeliever a clear issue or a hidden one?

Clarity and hiddenness differ depending on time, place, and circumstances

Ibn Mājah reported in his Sunan from Hudhayfah who said:

the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

“Islam will fade away as the embroidery of a garment fades, until it will not be known what fasting is, nor prayer, nor sacrifice, nor charity. And the Book of Allāh will be taken away in one night, and not a single verse will remain of it. And groups of people will remain – an old man and an old woman – saying: we found our forefathers upon this statement ‘lā ilāha illā Allāh,’ so we say it…” and at the end of it, Hudhayfah said: “It will save them from the Fire”

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“As time passed, much of what was once clear to people became hidden from many of them, and what was once obvious became subtle for many. Thus, among later generations there appeared much opposition to the Book and Sunnah that was not like what existed among the Salaf, even though they were striving and excused; Allāh forgives their mistakes and rewards them for their effort”

A clear issue is one that is known by both the common Muslims and their scholars, while a hidden issue is one that is not known by the common people but is specific to the scholars.

So is declaring the excuser – due to ignorance – of someone who fell into shirk while ascribing himself to Islam a matter known by the general Muslims, or is it something limited to the scholars?

The one who examines this issue will find that those who know it are only a small number among the scholars, so how can it be considered a clear matter while the general Muslims do not know it, rather even most of the scholars do not know it!

Rather, how can Muslims be declared disbelievers over an issue that their scholars do not know, let alone their common people!

Rather, most of the scholars who speak about it hold positions influenced by *irjāʾ*.

So in this issue there is a level of hiddenness among Muslims that is clear, and there are many doubts surrounding it that have filled books. After this, can anyone who understands the reality of the people say that it is a clear matter?

The unavoidable truth is that it is a hidden issue surrounded by doubts, and it is necessary to distinguish between ruling on the one who excuses – out of ignorance – a person who is an original disbeliever, such as the Jews, Christians, and others. In this case, he is an apostate because he denies the clear texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and this is a clear matter known by both the general Muslims and the scholars

As for the one who excuses out of ignorance someone who has fallen into major shirk while ascribing himself to Islam, he may not be denying the Qur'an and Sunnah. Rather, he may believe in the Qur'an and Sunnah, but the ruling has become unclear to him due to the innovations of the Murjiʾah, or due to some doubt that prevented him from declaring the excuser a disbeliever. So this person is not declared a disbeliever except after the establishment of proof and the removal of the doubt.

The evidence for this is what Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Sihmān mentioned regarding the consensus of the scholars on not declaring the excuser a disbeliever when a doubt is present

And Ibn Taymiyyah also mentioned the consensus of the scholars on not declaring the Murjiʾah disbelievers.

And it is well known that the Murjiʾah do not declare the excuser a disbeliever, as far as I know, and Allāh knows best.

The conclusion from what has preceded:

That declaring the excuser a disbeliever is a hidden issue surrounded by many doubts

That the one who excuses someone who has fallen into shirk from among those who ascribe themselves to Islam **is not declared a disbeliever except after the proof is established and the doubt is removed.**

That the one who excuses the original disbelievers, such as the Jews and Christians, **is a disbeliever and does not require the establishment of proof.**

That the occurrence of the excuser falling into something that constitutes disbelief is agreed upon as a general ruling, but applying it to a specific individual **requires the establishment of proof and the removal of doubt, as previously explained that this is a hidden issue surrounded by many doubts.**

And Allāh is the Guide to the straight path.

Written by the one in need of his Lord / **Abū Bilāl al-Ḥarbī**

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